

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Karen P. Hewitt***

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***For Further Information, Contact: Asst. U.S. Attorney Christopher R. McFadden (619-557-7031)***

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***For Immediate Release***

**NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - August 1, 2007.

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that a federal grand jury sitting in San Diego handed up a 36-count indictment charging Linda Bent Lampert with embezzling more than \$120,000 in veteran survivor's benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA"), between 1996 and 2006.

According to the indictment, the VA administers the Dependency Indemnity Compensation ("DIC") program, which makes benefits available to the unmarried, surviving spouses of deceased military veterans. The surviving spouse's entitlement to such benefits terminates upon the spouse's own death. The indictment charges that Lampert's mother, Eleanor Rhea Opie, became eligible to receive DIC benefits in December 1975 but lost eligibility upon her death in August 1996. For nearly ten years following the death of Lampert's mother, Lampert received more than \$120,000 in payments, despite having no right to them. Furthermore, the Indictment alleges that in August 2003, Lampert forged the signature of her deceased mother upon a document and submitted the fraudulent document to the VA.

“DIC benefits are reserved for the surviving spouses of American veterans who have heroically answered the call to duty,” said U.S. Attorney Hewitt. “Individuals who deceive the Department of Veterans Affairs and misappropriate those benefits—whether during moments of war or times of peace—dishonor us all.”

Lampert is expected to be arraigned on the indictment on August 6, 2007, at 1:30 p.m., before U.S. Magistrate Judge Barbara L. Major.

**DEFENDANT**

**Case Number: 07CR2049-BEN**

Linda Bent Lampert

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Title 18, United States Code, Section 641 (Theft of government funds)

Maximum Penalty: 10 years' imprisonment  
\$250,000 fine  
3 years supervised release

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001 (False statement to federal officer)

5 years' imprisonment  
\$250,000 fine  
3 years supervised release

**INVESTIGATING AGENCY**

Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General

**An indictment itself is not evidence that the defendant committed the crimes charged. The defendant is presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.**